

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BEIRUT 01482 210932Z
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7168
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AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY LONDON
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C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 1482

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT)

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, LE, US
SUBJ: SOUTH LEBANON: A COUNTRY IN DISTRESS

1. SUMMARY. PRIME MINISTER MAKES IMPASSIONED PLEA FOR US TO GET ISRAELIS OUT OF LEBANON. PAINTS HARROWING PICTURE OF PROBLEMS CAUSED BY FLIGHT OF SOME 150,000 REFUGEES FROM SOUTH TOWARDS THE NORTH. SAYS GOVERNMENT UNABLE COPE WITH THEM AND SITUATION IN WEST BEIRUT EDGING TOWARDS ANARCHY. ISRAELIS, ARMED BY AMERICANS, ATTACKED LEBANESE BECAUSE THEY WEAK, NOT BECAUSE THEY RESPONSIBLE FOR BUS INCIDENT. WHY DIDN'T THEY PICK ON SOMEONE THEIR OWN SIZE? AMBASSADOR URGES THAT USG BRING ALL ITS WEIGHT TO BEAR TO GET ISRAELIS TO WITHDRAW AS SOON AS WE CAN PUT UN FORCE ON THE GROUND. END SUMMARY.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BEIRUT 01482 210932Z

2. PRIME MINISTER HOSS CALLED AT ABOUT 1900 LOCAL ON MARCH 19 AND SAID HE NEEDED TO SEE ME. IT BEING TOO DANGEROUS FOR ME TO GO TO HIS HOUSE IN DOHA, HE VOLUNTEERED COME TO MY RESIDENCE. ON ARRIVAL HE SAID HE WANTED HAVE PRIVATE CONVERSATION TO LET ME KNOW HOW HE FELT AND WHAT HE WAS GOING THROUGH AS RESULT ISRAELI AGGRESSION AGAINST LEBANON.

3. HE SPOKE FEELINGLY FOR BETTER PART OF AN HOUR, POINTING OUT THAT IN FIRST PLACE SITUATION IN SOUTH LEBANON WAS LARGELY ONE OF ISRAEL'S MAKING. ISRAEL WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR PRESENCE OF PALESTINIAN REFUGEES AND ALSO RESPONSIBLE FOR ABSENCE OF ARAB DETERRENT FORCES SOUTH OF LITANI. SITUATION THERE HAD BEEN UNSTABLE BECAUSE ISRAEL WANTED IT THAT WAY, FOR ITS OWN REASONS. HE HAD BEEN CONSIDERED NAIVE WHEN, DURING SECRETARY'S LAST VISIT, HE HAD ASKED IF THERE WAS NO CHANCE ISRAEL WOULD PERMIT ADF TO MOVE BELOW LITANI, BUT THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN REALISTIC SOLUTION.

4. AS RESULT OF ISRAELI MILITARY ACTION SOME 150,000 LEBANESE AND PALESTINIANS NOW HOMELESS AND HUNDREDS HAD BEEN KILLED. LEBANON HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH THE ATTACK ON THE ISRAELI BUS. NOR DID THE PEOPLE OF SOUTH LEBANON NOW WANDERING THE STREETS LOOKING FOR FOOD AND SHELTER. ASIDE FROM THE HEART-RENDING SUFFERING TO BE SEEN ON EVERY HAND, INFLUX OF REFUGEES INTO WEST BEIRUT WAS CREATING CATASTROPHIC SITUATION. IF IT WAS NOT RELIEVED IMMEDIATELY, LEBANON WAS GOING DOWN THE DRAIN. NEVER IN HIS CAREER HAD HE FELT SO HELPLESS AND HOPELESS.

5. GOL HAD DONE ALL IT COULD. IT HAD CLOSED GOVT SCHOOLS FOR 15 DAYS AND THROWN THEM OPEN TO REFUGEES, IT HAD OPENED THE DERELICT HOTELS IN DOWNTOWN BEIRUT, IT HAD COMMANDEERED EMPTY HOUSING, IT HAD PUT UP TENTS, BUT THESE MEASURES WERE ONLY A DROP IN THE BUCKET. IF THE FIGHTING DID NOT STOP IMMEDIATELY AND PEOPLE WERE NOT ABLE TO RETURN TO THEIR HOMES IN THE SOUTH, GOD KNEW WHAT WAS CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BEIRUT 01482 210932Z

GOING TO HAPPEN. THERE WAS FIGHTING NOW OVER ACCESS TO BUILDINGS, PEOPLE WERE TAKING WHAT THEY WANTED TO EAT WITHOUT PAYING FOR IT AND BEIRUT WAS ON THE EDGE OF ANARCHY.

6. HE SAID IT WAS IRONIC THAT LEBANON WAS CONSIDERED, OF ALL THE ARAB COUNTRIES, TO BE THE CLOSEST TO THE WEST, AND THIS WAS ITS REWARD. LEBANESE WERE INNOCENT, BUT ISRAEL WAS OVERWEENING IN ITS MILITARY STRENGTH -- STRENGTH SUPPLIED BY THE UNITED STATES, UNFORTUNATELY. LEBANESE WERE BEING KILLED WITH THE F-15'S AND PHANTOMS SUPPLIED TO ISRAEL BY THE UNITED STATES. IF ISRAEL WANTED TO PUNISH THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE BUS INCIDENT, WHY DIDN'T IT ATTACK SYRIA OR IRAQ? THOSE WERE THE GOVERNMENTS WHICH SUPPORTED THE PALESTINIAN PRESENCE IN LEBANON. LIKE ANY BULLY, ISRAELIS PICKED WEAKEST KID ON THE BLOCK, AND EVEN THEN THEIR MILITARY PERFORMANCE WAS PRETTY SAD. THEY DEFEATED THE ENTIRE EGYPTIAN ARMY IN SIX DAYS IN 1967, AND IN FIVE DAYS THEY STILL HAD NOT BEEN ABLE TO BRING UNDER CONTROL 5,000 PALESTINIANS. THREE THOUSAND PALESTINIANS WOULD STILL BE ENOUGH TO WREAK TERROR IN ISRAEL. THE LATTER WOULD HAVE NO PEACE AND NO SECURITY UNTIL THE PROBLEM WAS SETTLED, AND IN THE MEANTIME THE UNITED STATES SHOULD NOT STAND BY AND LET IT VENT ITS FURY ON LEBANON.

7. I SAID I SHARED HIS CONCERN AT THE SUFFERING CAUSED TO INNOCENT LEBANESE AND PALESTINIANS ALIKE AND THAT MY GOVT WAS ALSO DEEPLY DISTURBED BY WHAT WAS HAPPENING, BUT WE HAD TO PUT IT IN CONTEXT. BUS INCIDENT HAD CREATED WAVE OF REVULSION THROUGHOUT WORLD. EVERYONE KNEW ISRAELIS WERE GOING TO RESPOND MILITARILY, AND EXPECTED THEM TO ATTACK SOUTH LEBANON. OUR INITIAL REACTION MAY HAVE SEEMED SOMEWHAT TEPID, BUT WE HAD SUBSEQUENTLY MADE CLEAR OUR OPPOSITION TO THE CONTINUED MILITARY ACTION AND HAD MOVED VERY QUICKLY IN THE UN AND ELSEWHERE TO TRY TO BRING IT TO A HALT. THE RESOLUTION WE HAD SPONSORED IN THE SECURITY COUNCIL HAD JUST PASSED, AND THE IMPORTANT THING NOW WAS TO GET ON WITH THE CREATION OF A UN FORCE AND ITS ESTABLISHMENT IN SOUTH LEBANON. WE HOPED THIS COULD BE DONE QUICKLY, BUT THERE WAS A LARGE QUESTION MARK

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 BEIRUT 01482 210932Z

REGARDING PALESTINIAN ATTITUDES. WOULD THEY COOPERATE?

8. HOSS SAID HE DID NOT KNOW. HE WAS MORE WORRED ABOUT THE ISRAELIS. HE KNEW THEY WOULD TRY TO EXACT A QUID PRO QUO FOR EVERY INCH THEY GAVE, AND THEY WERE GOING TO PROLONG THEIR OCCUPATION IN LEBANON. I SAID I DID NOT THINK THEY WOULD AND THAT THERE WOULD BE A MAJOR CRISIS IN US-ISRAELI RELATIONS IF THEY TRIED.

9. AT THIS POINT DCM LANE CALLED TO REPORT DEPARTMENT'S INTEREST IN KNOWING ABOUT DISASTER RELIEF REQUIREMENTS. HOSS SAID GOL HAD SUPPLIES FOR A FEW DAYS BUT NEEDED ALL THE HELP IT COULD GET. HE HAD NO FIGURES, BUT THE NEED WAS ENORMOUS. I SAID AID REP WAS IN TOUCH WITH APPROPRIATE AUTHORITIES AND WE WOULD DO ALL WE COULD.

10. COMMENT: ABOVE IS SUMMARY OF VERY IMPASSIONED PRESENTATION BY NORMALLY PHLEGMATIC HOSS. HIS HOUSE SOUTH OF BEIRUT IS BESIDE THE REFUGEE ROUTE FROM SIDON AND HE AND HIS WIFE HAVE BEEN BESIEGED BY PETITIONERS FOR PAST FOUR DAYS. HIS FRIENDS, MANY OF WHOM OWN APARTMENT BUILDINGS, ARE SEEING THEIR PROPERTIES OCCUPIED BY SQUATTERS. LAW AND ORDER, SUCH AS IT WAS, IS SERIOUSLY FRAYED THROUGHOUT WEST BEIRUT (E.G., THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE WAS SPRAYED BY MACHINE GUN BULLETS ON SATURDAY IN THE COURSE OF A FIGHT BETWEEN MURABITUN AND PALESTINIANS OVER ACCESS TO A NEARBY BUILDING). STREETS ARE FULL OF ARMED MEN AND SECURITY FORCES ARE UNABLE COPE. WE WILL HAVE ALL THE MAKINGS OF A CATASTROPHE UNLESS THE REFUGEES ARE ABLE TO RETURN TO SOUTH QUICKLY.

11. WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT PROPOSALS BEGIN IS CARRYING WITH HIM TO WASHINGTON, BUT DOUBT THAT HE HAS ANYTHING TO OFFER WHICH WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE TO EITHER LEBANESE OR PALESTINIANS. WE SUSPECT HE WILL TRY TO TEMPORIZE AND SEEK "GUARANTEES" FOR ISRAEL'S SECURITY

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 05 BEIRUT 01482 210932Z

BEFORE WITHDRAWING. FOR THE SAKE OF LEBANON AND OUR POSITION
IN THE MIDDLE EAST, I STRONGLY URGE THAT THE USG BRING ALL OF

ITS CONSIDERABLE INFLUENCE TO BEAR AT THIS POINT TO GET THE
ISRAELIS OUT OF LEBANON AS FAST AS WE CAN GET A UN FORCE ON THE
GROUND.

PARKER

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